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keen nerves of sensation we should allow our senses the dominion over us, is twaddle. We fancy a Fijian chief saying to his wife, "My higher nature adores you; but really I have such a fine set of teeth, and you are so tender, that a due respect for the artistic part of me will compel me to bake you to-morrow."

- 14.—*BEETHOVEN's Letters.* (1790–1826.) *From the Collection of Dr. Ludwig Nohl. Also his Letters to the Archduke Rudolph, Cardinal-Archbishop of Olmütz, K. W., from the Collection of Dr. Ludwig Ritter von Köchel.* Translated by LADY WALLACE. With a Portrait and Fac-simile. New York: Hurd and Houghton. 1867. 2 vols. 16mo. pp. xviii., 234; ix., 257.

OF the three collections of letters of famous musical composers recently published, — Mendelssohn, Mozart, and Beethoven, — the personal interest is in inverse proportion to the greatness of their respective authors. The more complete the power of expression in tones, the less is that of expression in words. These letters of Beethoven contain scarcely a trace of those spiritual qualities which are so fully developed in his music. They are little more than the record of the trivial concerns of his daily life, — a life thoroughly commonplace in all external conditions. It is an irreverence to the memory of such a genius as Beethoven to display to the public these disconnected and empty trifles as an exhibition of his character; and it is doing injustice to his admirers to offer them such material without at least fastening the odds and ends together with some slight thread of biographical elucidation. The well-known main facts of Beethoven's discordant life, his rough yet sensitive nature, his deafness, his ill-health, his vehement but changing attachments to more than one woman, his care of, and his disappointment in, his nephew, are, of course, all brought to mind in the course of the letters; and the foot-notes afford explanations of some of the minor points touched upon; but the volumes are silent, for the most part, with regard to Beethoven's personal relations with his correspondents, the nature of which is often not to be inferred from these scraps of writing, and the knowledge of which might perhaps confer an accidental value on them.

The most interesting letter in this collection, and one of the few which have any proper autobiographical character, is one written at the age of thirty-two, and addressed nominally to those whom he called his "unbrotherly brothers," but in fact to the world at large.

"Born with a passionate and excitable temperament," he says, "keenly susceptible to the pleasures of society, I was yet obliged early in life to isolate myself, and to pass my existence in solitude. If I at any time resolved to surmount all this, O how cruelly was I again repelled by the experience, sadder than ever, of my defective hearing. And yet I found it impossible to say to others, 'Speak louder; shout! for I am deaf!' Alas! how could I proclaim the deficiency of a sense which ought to have been more perfect with me than with other men, — a sense which I once possessed in the highest perfection, to an extent, indeed, that few of my profession ever enjoyed! Alas! I cannot do this. Forgive me, therefore, when you see me withdrawn from you with whom I would so gladly mingle. My misfortune is doubly severe from causing me to be misunderstood. No longer can I enjoy recreation in social intercourse, refined conversation, or mutual outpourings of thought. Completely isolated, I only enter society when compelled to do so. I must live like an exile. In company I am assailed by the most fearful apprehensions from the dread of being exposed to the risk of my condition being observed. It was the same during the last six months I spent in the country. My intelligent physician recommended me to spare my hearing as much as possible, which was quite in accordance with my present disposition, though sometimes tempted by my natural inclination for society. I allowed myself to be beguiled into it. But what humiliation when any one beside me heard a flute in the far distance, while I heard nothing, or when others heard a shepherd singing, and I still heard nothing! Such things brought me to the verge of desperation, and wellnigh caused me to put an end to my life. Art, art alone, deterred me. Ah! how could I possibly quit the world before bringing forth all that I felt it was my vocation to produce? And thus I spared this miserable life, — so utterly miserable that any sudden change may reduce me at any moment from my best condition into the worst. It is decreed that I must now choose *Patience* for my guide! This I have done. I hope the resolve will not fail me, steadfastly to persevere till it may please the inexorable Fates to cut the thread of my life. Perhaps I may get better, perhaps not. I am prepared for either. Constrained to become a philosopher in my twenty-eighth year! This is no slight trial, and more severe on an artist than on any one else. God looks into my heart, he searches it, and knows that love for man and feelings of benevolence have their abode there! O, ye who may one day read this, think that ye have done me injustice, and let any one similarly afflicted be consoled by finding one like himself, who, in defiance of all the obstacles of Nature, has done all in his power to be included in the ranks of estimable artists and men."

The conviction of moral rectitude which finds expression in this last sentence often reappears elsewhere. In 1817 he writes: "My confidence is placed in Providence, who will vouchsafe to hear my prayer, and one day set me free from all my troubles; for I have served him faithfully from my childhood, and done good whenever it has been in my power; so my trust is in him alone, and I feel that the Almighty

will not allow me to be utterly crushed by all my manifold trials." Again, in writing to Nägeli, and sending him a subscription to his poems, in which he was himself panegyricized, Beethoven says: "Pray, do not imagine that I am at all guided by self-interest: I am free from all petty vanity; in godlike art alone dwells the impulse which gives me strength to sacrifice the best part of my life to the celestial Muse. From childhood my greatest pleasure and felicity consisted in working for others: you may therefore conclude how sincere is my delight in being in any degree of use to you."

Of his great contemporary, Goethe, Beethoven rarely makes mention, as if in unconscious return for the *no* mention of himself in Goethe's writings. There is a hint, perhaps, of the cause, in a letter to Bettina von Arnim.

"Yesterday, on our way home, we [Goethe and himself] met the whole Imperial family; we saw them coming some way off, when Goethe withdrew his arm from mine, in order to stand aside; and, say what I would, I could not prevail on him to make another step in advance. I pressed down my hat more firmly on my head, buttoned up my great-coat, and, crossing my arms behind me, I made my way through the thickest portion of the crowd. Princes and courtiers formed a lane for me: Archduke Rudolph took off his hat, and the Empress bowed to me first. These great ones of the earth *know me*. To my infinite amusement, I saw the procession defile past Goethe, who stood aside with his hat off, bowing profoundly. I afterwards took him sharply to task for this: I gave him no quarter, and upbraided him with all his sins, especially towards you, my dear friend, as we had just been speaking of you. Heavens! if I could have lived with you as *he* did, believe me, I should have produced far greater things."

We will make but one more extract,—the close of the letter to his brothers before quoted from. The pathetic emotions these words inadequately express are the same in character and intensity with those which give life and meaning to some of the most enduring strains of his music.

"Thus, then, I take leave of you, and with sadness too. The fond hope I brought with me here, of being to a certain degree cured, now utterly forsakes me. As autumn leaves fall and wither, so are my hopes blighted. Almost as I came, I depart. Even the lofty courage that so often animated me in the lovely days of summer is gone forever. O Providence! vouchsafe me one day of pure felicity! How long have I been estranged from the glad echo of true joy! When, O my God! when shall I again feel it in the temple of Nature and of man?—never? Ah! that would be too hard!"

These volumes, as we have said, afford no sufficient materials for a true estimate of the character of Beethoven. Such materials we confidently anticipate in the long expected and desired biography by our countryman, Mr. Thayer.